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# A Partner in the Persian Gulf

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# University of Dayton, Ohio (url: <http://www.udayton.edu/index.php>)



## A Partner in the Persian Gulf

**04.02.2009 | Campus and Community, President**

It's one of the smallest countries in the world, but is the world that small that "UD" is a household name in Kuwait?

"I worry about using UD, instead of the University of Dayton, in some settings, but not in Kuwait. Everyone knows UD in Kuwait," said President Daniel J. Curran after a weeklong trip to the Arab country at the invitation of the Kuwaiti government. "I was struck by the number of University of Dayton graduates in high positions in Kuwait. We have a tremendous opportunity to reestablish

the connection between UD and Kuwait."

Currently, 21 Kuwaiti students are studying on campus through scholarships sponsored by their government. Enrollment of Kuwaiti students boomed in the 1970s and 1980s, and now appears to be on an upswing again. In Kuwait, college professors, a chief information officer and even the owner of a large, popular Lebanese restaurant count themselves as University of Dayton alumni.

"Every place we visited we met UD grads," said Joseph Saliba, provost. "We have scores of graduates in Kuwait, and they have tremendous affinity for UD. The opportunity to recruit more students from Kuwait is second to none."

That doesn't surprise Riad Alakkad, assistant dean for undergraduate advising and retention in the School of Engineering who accompanied Curran and Saliba to the land of his childhood, a bustling cosmopolitan country along the Persian Gulf. Although he "didn't know a single person" at the University of Dayton in 1978, Alakkad transferred into the civil engineering program — and never left.

Today, he knows every Kuwaiti student on campus — even those who aren't studying engineering.

"I'd been admitted to many other institutions, but I chose UD," said Alakkad, who was born in Jordan but calls Kuwait home. "It's the most welcoming place I've ever been."

Curran believes the Marianist spirit of hospitality wraps itself around students no matter how far they find themselves from home.

Just ask Ali Nassrallah, who transferred from the College of Technological Studies in Kuwait, upon the recommendation of his father, the country's cultural attaché. "I really like Dayton because of the people. They're very kind, and the professors give you more time," said Nassrallah, a junior electronics engineering major.

Curran believes that experience can be duplicated for more students from Kuwait and other Mideastern countries.

"Students who came in the '70s and '80s found the University of Dayton to be a community that cared about them and treated them as equals. They never felt different here. They were supported," Curran said. "They loved the University so deeply that they rejoiced when we came back to Kuwait."

Before leaving Kuwait, UD officials signed initial agreements with Kuwait University and The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, a two-year technical school. PAAET is interested in sending its business, engineering and education students to UD to finish their undergraduate degrees. The school is also seeking faculty exchanges and curricular development help. The admission office is following up with a recruiting trip to Kuwait this spring.

"There's thirst for further enhancement in higher education," Saliba said. "We'd like Kuwait University to send graduate students here, and both universities are interested in collaborative research projects."

In late May, Curran and Saliba are planning a similar outreach trip to Lebanon, where they will reconnect with alumni and explore partnerships with universities. They also want to establish a University of Dayton alumni chapter in the Mideast.

It's all part of a push to internationalize campus and expose American students to the world.

"This is the future of higher education," Curran said. "It will be much more global than in the past."